

# MAINE CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND COMMISSION

## MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING

October 2, 2017

*Augusta, Maine*

A public meeting of the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission ("Commission") was held on October 2, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. in Room 208 of the Burton M. Cross Office Building in Augusta, Maine. Commissioner Mary Toole presided over the hearing with fellow Commissioners John Foster and Angela Farrell. Also present to support the Commissioners were Brenda Kielty, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Maine Attorney General, and Diana Scully, Executive Director, Maine Justice Foundation.

The purpose of the public meeting was to discuss and make funding allocations and decisions for the 2018 – 2019 funding cycle based on applications that had been submitted to the Commission by the September 1, 2017 deadline. Notice of the application process as well as notice of the meeting was published on the webpages for the Maine Justice Foundation and the State of Maine Judicial Branch. In addition, the Maine Justice Foundation sent an email to all current recipients of the fund.

The Commission received 7 applications for funding from the following organizations:

Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic  
Disability Rights Maine  
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
Legal Services for the Elderly  
Maine Equal Justice Partners  
Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project  
Pine Tree Legal Assistance

Commissioner Toole opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and introduced Commissioners Foster and Farrell. Commissioner Toole described the process the Commission would follow for the meeting. The applicants were asked to make their oral presentations to the Commission in alphabetical order, although Pine Tree Legal Assistance presented last to accommodate a scheduling conflict.

In the summer of 2017, the Commission conducted the first ever site visits to the applicants' locations. The Commissioners visited all current grant recipients at least one of the applicant's locations and met with board members and staff of the various grant recipients. The commissioners noted that they had not deliberated or discussed the visits until this public meeting, and agreed that the experience provided a much better understanding and appreciation for applicant operations. There was unanimous support and recommendation for continuing site visits in the future. For grant applicants who might be new to the process, it was recommended that a site visit occur between the submission of the application and the public hearing.

Commissioner Toole then opened the meeting to presentations by each organization in the assigned order. The following individuals gave statements and answered the Commission's questions on behalf of the organizations with which they were affiliated:

*Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic*

Danielle Conway, Dean, University of Maine School of Law  
Dierdre Smith, Professor and Clinic Director

*Disability Rights Maine*

Chad Hansen, Vice President, Board of Directors  
Kim Moody, Executive Director

*Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project*

Leslie Silverstein, President, Board of Directors  
Sue Roche, Executive Director

*Legal Services for the Elderly*

Charlie Soltan, Chair, Board of Directors  
Jaye Martin, Executive Director

*Maine Equal Justice Partners*

Charles Dingman, Vice Chair, Board of Directors  
Robyn Merrill, Executive Director

*Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project*

Juliet Holmes-Smith, Executive Director

*Pine Tree Legal Assistance*

Nan Heald, Executive Director

Next the Commission commenced its deliberations. The Commission used the number of \$1.3 million as the most accurate estimate of the amount that was available for distribution during this funding cycle. The Commission discussed the tragedy of not having resources to fund all the organizations at a higher level and the difficulty of taking funding from one organization to give to another.

The Commission commenced with discussion of specific funding allocations to the seven applicants and voted to maintain the same percentage allocations from the 2016 – 2017 funding cycle.


The Commission decided on the following allocations for the two-year funding cycle beginning January 1, 2018:

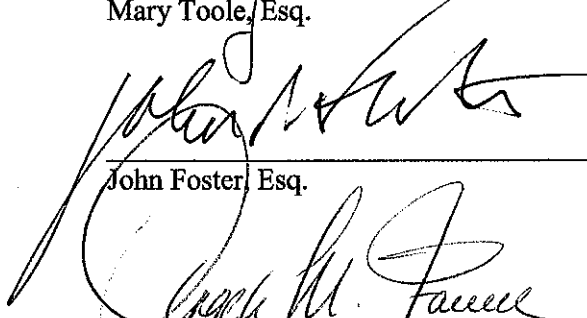
Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project	6.039%
Legal Services for the Elderly	20.7355%
Pine Tree Legal Assistance	47.718%
Disability Rights Maine	2.98%
Maine Equal Justice Partners	10.89%
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project	5.2025%
Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic	6.435%

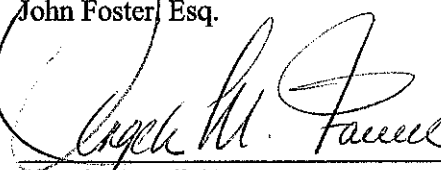
Following the vote on the funding allocations, the Commission discussed how to improve the application format and the public hearing process. A concern was raised about the volume of application documents that are submitted for Commission review, whether some materials are duplicative of the

information gained in site visits and what information is required by Commission rules. The Commission recognized the level of collegiality among the applicants in considering how to best approach the impact of any future funding cuts, and talked about deciding how to handle key issues in the event of a reconsideration of the allocations or a severe crisis in funding from other sources by an applicant. The Commission discussed changing the hearing process if the application is made more compact to allow the Commission to reengage with an applicant before a final vote to confirm any facts.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Mary Toole, Esq.

  
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John Foster, Esq.

  
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Angela Farrell, Esq.